

# Washington Hospitals and Birthing Centers Certified Breastfeeding Friendly

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## SUMMARY

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is teaming up with community organizations across the state to improve access to breastfeeding friendly hospitals and birthing centers. These facilities can help improve breastfeeding duration and exclusivity by supporting mothers in meeting their breastfeeding goals. Now, staff at these facilities get the training needed to help mothers breastfeed longer. As a result, 14 of 50 eligible maternity hospitals in Washington State were awarded the state's Breastfeeding Friendly designation.



## CHALLENGE

Despite high initiation rates, Washington's exclusive and long-term (over 6 months) breastfeeding rates fall short of Healthy People 2020 goals. More than 87% of Washington's babies start out life breastfeeding, yet by day two, 14% of these babies have received formula. Approximately 28% of babies are exclusively breastfed for 6 months, and only 39% of babies are breastfed at all by 1 year of age. Research shows that breast milk strengthens a

child's immune system. Also, breastfeeding can protect infants from sudden infant death syndrome. In addition, women who breastfeed have lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes, or ovarian and breast cancers. Breastfeeding rates tend to be lower among young mothers aged 20 years or younger, and mothers that are American Indian/Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic black, or low-income.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

DOH partnered with community organizations, including the Washington State Hospital Association, and Midwives' Association of Washington State to increase awareness about benefits of breastfeeding friendly facilities. Learn more about BFWA at [www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov). This project was supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

*"Hospitals that support breastfeeding are helping to raise the healthiest next generation. Expectant parents will soon have an easier time finding a breastfeeding-friendly birthing facility, thanks to the Breastfeeding Friendly Washington program."*

- Washington Secretary of Health,  
John Wiesman

## Contact

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## SOLUTION

DOH is working to encourage hospitals and birthing centers to offer patient centered, baby friendly maternity practices within the health care system, and to provide educational resources and trainings on proven methods to increase breastfeeding duration among mothers. The health department and a coalition of community organizations launched Breastfeeding Friendly Washington (BFWA), a voluntary program based on the World Health Organization's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. The program provides hospital and birthing center staff training on how to implement all 10 steps. Birthing facilities can attain bronze, silver, or gold recognition, depending on the number of steps they practice.

## RESULTS

As of October 2016, 14 of 50 eligible maternity hospitals in Washington State were awarded the state's Breastfeeding Friendly designation. DOH expects to offer more awards—over 32 hospitals and birth centers have reached out to learn more about the BFWA project. Hospitals play an important role in supporting breastfeeding. In Washington State, 11% of births took place in Baby-Friendly Hospitals, and 34% of births in 2015 took place in facilities designated as breastfeeding friendly by the state. In addition, Washington State leads the nation in midwife use. Through a collaborative effort with the Midwives Association of Washington, 3 of 12 birthing centers in the state are now looking to set up all 10 steps to successful breastfeeding at their facility.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
NCCDPHP

#### Contact CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>

#### Web site

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

DOH will continue to seek out and collaborate with community partners across Washington State to improve access to maternity care best practice. DOH is also taking steps to expand BFWA to child care facilities, clinics and worksite within urban and rural areas, and in tribal communities. They are partnering with the state WIC program to collaborate with hospitals in low-income communities reach more birthing facilities across the state. DOH will continue to provide technical assistance and training to all facilities working on or meeting the 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
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